

South-Eastern Union of Scientific Societies

ANNUAL CONGRESS

THE fortieth annual congress of the South-Eastern Union of Scientific Societies was held at Bournemouth on June 26-29, under the presidency of Prof. A. C. Seward, Master of Downing College, Cambridge.

In his presidential address, Prof. Seward took as his subject "The Herbarium of the Rocks". He invited his audience to accompany him on a journey to a partially reconstructed forest of the Tertiary era. The Miocene Mascall flora of the John Day Basin of Oregon shows a close resemblance to that of the present-day Redwood Forest belt, although the former is many miles north of the latter. During the Oligocene period, Redwood forests very similar to those of California to-day have left traces in the Bridge Creek flora of the Crooked River Basin, south of the John Day Basin, and amongst other elements of this, for the most part dicotyledonous, flora is an Asiatic element showing relationship with Chinese plants. A similar flora to the Bridge Creek flora is found to have a wide range, since it occurs in Switzerland, Greenland, Siberia and Manchuria, but it is now confined to a narrow belt on the coast of California and Oregon. The Goschen flora of Upper Eocene times is another flora that differs widely from modern floras in corresponding latitudes. The view that these floras owe the members that they have in common to a southward migration of the parent plants from high northern latitudes has been confirmed in recent years. There must be a common origin for the similar living floras on both sides of the Pacific. Fifty-nine per cent of the genera of the Goschen flora are recorded from Cretaceous beds in the northern hemisphere where now is an arctic climate. Prof. Seward suggested that perhaps the Cretaceous ancestors of Tertiary plants were more tolerant of low temperatures. The ring of Tertiary floras that girdles the polar regions shows a decline of climate as compared with those of Cretaceous times. The Mull flora has much in common with that of arctic lands, and this with the other Tertiary flora represented by the inadequately-studied flora of Bournemouth show that there were then two distinct botanical provinces.

In the Archæological Section, Mr. T. D. Kendrick spoke on "Early Christian Art in the British Isles". Mr. J. B. Calkin demonstrated that prehistoric Bournemouth was full of interest. He has made a large collection of pottery and flint implements, which for want of a public museum are not available to the general public. His story of Bournemouth began with prehistoric man's implements found in the gravels between that town and Christchurch. Whilst there is no evidence of glacier conditions, the area was abnormally cold during parts of the Pleistocene era. Acheulean man lived here before the gravels were laid down, which were due to subsidence. At one time the area contained more than a hundred barrows. Few have been properly excavated, an exception being those of Hengistbury. Strangely enough, scarcely a single barrow faces Poole Harbour. Ten drinking beakers out of eighteen for the whole of Hampshire have been found in the district. Two food-vessels have come from Swanage, associated in

each case with a human skull. In one Bronze Age site more than a hundred urns came to light, although most of them had been destroyed. An early Iron Age culture was found in Long Field, Hengistbury, corresponding with that of Hallstatt on the Continent. Mr. Calkin exhibited many of the remains to which he alluded in his paper.

Prof. R. J. Tabor and Prof. M. C. Potter read papers of a botanical nature. The Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain spoke on ornithological progress during the past fifty years, and commented on the new nomenclature that he and others were successful in bringing into effect, and on the increased study of bird-life as shown by the British Ornithologists' Union, now numbering more than 400 members, although it commenced in 1858 with twenty members. Some attention was given to the modern recognition of races of birds as well as species. "If the breeding ranges of two forms overlap or coincide and yet remain apart they must be species; if on the other hand they are obviously closely allied and yet replace one another geographically they are races." The hooded and carrion crows are distinguishable at a glance, and although they as a rule have different breeding ranges, there are places in Scotland, Germany and Russia where they interbreed. Mrs. K. Grant spoke on "Migration of Butterflies" and showed an exhibit from the entomological department at Rothamsted.

In the Geological Section, Dr. H. D. Thomas made out a good case for certain lines of evolution, or trends, in respect of fossil foraminifera and other lowly forms of life. A lecture by Lieut.-Colonel C. D. Drew on "Recent Excavations at Maiden Castle" was followed by a visit under his guidance by about seventy members to the earthworks. Here the cutting into the filled-up ditch, which had yielded neolithic evidence, was seen and also the remains of the Roman temple, round which were strewn innumerable roofing-tiles. Reference should be made to the small bronze bull which was found, with the upper parts of three human figures on its head and back; this was afterwards seen in the Dorchester Museum. In the museum was noticeable a large area covered with Roman tessellated pavement, laid down as originally on the floor of a Roman villa.

Dr. Vaughan Cornish gave one of his delightful talks on "Scenic Amenities in Town and Country".

Visits were made to Corfe, Littlesea, Beaulieu Abbey, Poole Pottery Works, Wareham, and other places of scientific interest, whilst on the social side of the Congress, the Mayor and Corporation gave the Union a civic reception at the Pavilion.

Educational Topics and Events

EDINBURGH.—Sir Charles Sherrington has been appointed Gifford lecturer for the years 1936-37 and 1937-38.

At the medical graduation ceremony on July 17, the honorary degree of LL.D. was conferred on Prof. A. N. Richards, professor of pharmacology in the University of Pennsylvania.

LEEDS.—Mr. H. S. Clough has given £250 towards the erection of an observatory to house the telescope and other astronomical instruments recently presented by Mrs. Bolton of Bramley.